

The Facts

- 2/5 clients with chronic pain search online for info on pain conditions.¹
- Many clients are more confident in online info than their own physician,² and base treatment choices on this info.³

These numbers are concerning because...

- Most of us do not question the accuracy and truthfulness of info found online.⁴
- The vast majority of websites about pain conditions are of poor quality.
- In particular, many websites...
 - provide info that is unsupported by scientific research.
 - are irrelevant to the info being sought.
 - are designed to make money for the owner of the website.

¹ Corcoran, T. B., Haigh, F., Seabrook, A., & Schug, S. (2009). The quality of Internet-sourced information for patients with chronic pain is poor. *Clinical Journal of Pain*, 25, 617-623.

² Diaz, J. A., Griffith, R. A., Ng, J. J., Reinert, S. E., Friedmann, P. D., & Moulton, A. W. (2002). Patients' use of the Internet for medical information. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 17, 180-185.

³ de Boer, M. J., Versteegen, G. J., & van Wijhe, M. (2007). Patients' use of the Internet for pain-related medical information. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 68, 86-97.

⁴ Anderson, J. G., Rainey, M. R., & Eysenbach, G. (2003). The impact of CyberHealthcare on the physician-patient relationship. *Journal of Medical Systems*, 27, 67-84.



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FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PAIN ONLINE



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Finding Information about your Pain Online

10 of the Best Quality Pain Sites



www.cigna.com/healthinfo/tv2262.html

- pelvic pain; causes; diagnosis; treatment; prevention

adam.about.net/reports/Migraine-headaches.htm

- migraine types; causes; prognosis; triggers; treatment

www.webmd.com/pain-management/default.htm

- pain conditions; diagnosis; treatment; management

www.aolhealth.com/condition-center/arthritis

- arthritis; diagnosis; self-management

www.painfoundation.org

- general pain; decision-making & caregiver guides

arthritis.about.com/

- symptoms; diagnosis; treatment; management

www.canadianpaincoalition.ca/

- conditions; living with pain; treatment; self-care

www.emedicinehealth.com/chronic_pain/article_em.htm

- conditions; treatment; related topics and diseases

www.aolhealth.com/condition-center/back-pain

- diagnosis; prevention; treatment; self-management

www.fibromyalgia-symptoms.org/

- symptoms; diagnosis; treatment; self-care



These websites were rated highly using the DISCERN and were active as of February 15, 2012.

Determining Website Information Quality



Below are a list of questions to ask yourself as you browse the web for information about your condition or concern.

Does the website...

1. clearly state its purpose?
2. contain information relevant to your condition?
3. contain realistic and appropriate treatment options?
4. back up information with references?
5. clearly state when it was produced and updated?
6. provide objective and unbiased information?
7. provide links to sites with further information?
8. describe how each treatment option works?
9. describe the benefits and risks of each treatment?
10. explain how treatments will impact quality of life?
11. emphasize that there is more than one treatment?
12. identify risks and benefits of not seeking treatment?
13. suggest questions to ask your health care provider?

**The information contained in this pamphlet is based on the DISCERN health information evaluation tool, a brief questionnaire designed to provide users with a reliable way of assessing the quality of written health information. The DISCERN questionnaire is available for FREE at <http://www.discrim.org.uk/index.php>. Please see the website for more information on this useful tool.*

Warning Signs of Poor Quality Websites



Be wary if:

- the website is attempting to **sell** a specific product or treatment.
- recommendations are based largely on personal testimonials or success stories from one or more users. High quality websites usually support their information with scientific evidence.
- the website tries to gain your attention by using emotional, unbelievable, or alarmist claims. If the claims sound too good to be true, they probably are. **NEVER** consider such options without discussing with a qualified health care professional first.
- the information comes from only one source, or no reference list is provided.

Warning

Please be advised that information on the suggested websites is intended for educational purposes only and should never be a replacement for the advice of your family physician. **If you have or think you may have a medical condition, you should consult a health care professional, who can properly diagnose and treat the problem. Never ignore the advice of physician because of something you have read on these or any other websites. Always consult with a qualified health care provider before considering any treatment, diet, or program found online.*